EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES KOSOVO

GUIDEBOOK ON HOW TO ESTABLISH COMMUNITY-BASED PARALEGALS

Working Towards a Stable Multi-Ethnic Kosovo

Important Note: The views and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women or any other organization under the auspices of the United Nations.

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I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Women belonging to minority groups in Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999) – particularly Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian and Serb minorities – face a de facto double discrimination, as women and as members of minorities and are vulnerable to GBV. Domestic violence in Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999) has remained at high rates since the 1999 conflict. While this form of GBV affects all women in Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999), minority communities are affected in particular due to their already marginalised and vulnerable position in society.

Domestic violence is one of the most common forms of violation of women's rights. Indeed, women represent the overall primary victims of violence within the family circles, followed by children, elderly, persons with special needs and members of the LGBT community. Among the women, majorly affected are young wives (nuse), women in fertile age and pregnant women, and women who suffered sexual violence during the war. Additionally, poorly educated and unemployed women, living in poor economic circumstances and mainly in rural isolated areas constitute the most vulnerable group in this sense (Agency for Gender Equality Kosovo)[1]. According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey conducts by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics in collaboration with UNICEF, "3 in 4 women from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities state that a husband is justified to hit or beat his wife for a variety of reasons."[2]

In addition, child and forced marriage remains prevalent among Serb, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999), with some with "some marrying as young as 12" (UNFPA Factsheet, 2012:5).[3] According to the MCIS, "12% of women from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo are married by age 15 and 43% by age 18." This practice has been identified as a key factor in reinforcing the vulnerable status of particularly Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities (Strategy for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in the Republic of Kosovo, 2008:10 & 56).[4] To address this practice a change in attitude is required as currently many Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians still have predominantly positive views of child marriage. For example, "In a 2008 survey of 270 Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian women, one-third believed early marriage could facilitate healthy

[1] Office of the Prime Minister. "Kosovo Program against Domestic Violence and Action Plan." (n.d.): n. pag. Republic of Kosovo Government, 2011. Web.
[2] KAS, and UNICEF. "MICS." *Kosovo Agency for Statistics*. Kosovo Agency for Statistics, n.d. Web.
[3] UNFPA. *The Extent of Gender-Based Violence in Kosova and Its Impact on Women's Reproductive Health*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. *Kosova Women's Netowrk*. Kosova Women's Network, 2008. Web.
[4] Office of the Prime Minister. "Strategy for The Integration Of Roma, Ashkali And Egyptian Communities In The Republic Of Kosovo." (n.d.): n. pag. Republic of Kosovo Government, 2008. Web.

childbirth, and 60 per cent felt parents should decide who their daughters marry" (UNFPA Factsheet, 2012:5).[5]

Institutions working against GBV in Kosovo

Regarding other International/national/regional/local institutions and key actors working and developing initiatives to assist, respond against and prevent GBV in Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999), several organisations are worth mentioning:

- **The Office for Good Governance:** the body, located within the office of the Prime Minister, responsible for overseeing and coordinating government policy on gender issues and counselling the Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999) government on these matters.
- **The Agency for Gender Equality:** Established with the promulgation of the Law on Gender Equality and is responsible for promoting equal values and opportunities regardless of gender in Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999).
- **The Centres for Social Welfare (CSW):** The CSWs are a key mechanism to support the survivors of violence in families in dealing with the courts and police, connect them with hospitals and safe homes and provide them with psycho-social and legal advice.
- **The Kosovo Police:** is responsible to respond to any call, act or threat to commit crimes of domestic violence or violation of a protection order. Moreover, the Kosovo Police is entitled to use reasonable means to protect survivors of domestic violence and prevent further violence.
- **The Victims' Advocacy and Assistance Division:** Within the Ministry of Justice, it is a unit that offers legal advice and assistance to all survivors of violence free of charge during the legal process, as well as free legal representation before the court. Providing a similar service, the Legal Aid Commission (LAC), is also relevant for its role providing legal assistance, including court representation, to survivors of GBV.
- **Shelters:** Shelters provide survivors of GBV and their children a safe place where to temporarily stay and receive basic services such as food, clothing, psycho-social and legal advice, medical assistance, professional development, health education and activities for children. Currently there are shelters in Gjakova/Djakovica, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Pejë/Peć,

[5] UNFPA. *The Extent of Gender-Based Violence in Kosova and Its Impact on Women's Reproductive Health*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. *Kosova Women's Netowrk*. Kosova Women's Network, 2008. Web.

Prishtinë/Priština and Prizren. Shelters in Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999) are organised under the Kosovo Shelters Coalition.

Finally, **The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**, **UN WOMEN**, the **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**, **the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**, and the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** in close cooperation with key stakeholders at central and local level have developed several projects and joint programs entitled 'Support to addressing Gender Based Violence in Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999) through strengthening the Implementation of the Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999) Law, National Action Plan and Strategy against Domestic Violence'.

II. THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN KOSOVO (UNDER UN SCR 1244/1999)

Serb, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities suffer an extremely disadvantaged status throughout the region in general, and in Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999) in particular. These communities commonly face limited access to employment, education and adequate health care, lack of social integration, weak representative political entities and general underrepresentation within the civil service. Focusing more closely on the communities' economic condition, the scarce employment opportunities appear additionally worsened by endemic discrimination. Indeed, the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians experience widespread policies of exclusion and entrenched inequalities in the working environment, being directly and often overtly linked to their ethnic belonging.[6] Significantly, the comparison of the average incomes and unemployment rates among communities at the national level reveals their particularly vulnerable position.

According to UNDP, while the average monthly salary per person in Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999) is around €260 - the lowest in the region after Albania, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian families' average total income stays under €120 a month; while 47.02% of Kosovar Albanians are unemployed, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians heavily surpass these figures with respectively 60.22%, 60.46% and 80% of unemployment (Source: Kosovo Human Development Report 2012).[7]

[6] ECMI Kosovo. Promoting the Economic Empowerment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women in Kosovo (n.d.): n. pag. ECMI Kosovo, 2013. Web.
[7] UNDP. "Kosovo Human Development Report." (n.d.): n. pag. Swiss Cooperation Office Kosovo, 2012. Web.

Moreover, the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities lack effective integration into education, social, economic, institutional (The Implementation of Civil Service Legislation in Kosovo, OSCE, 2013)[8] and political life (OSCE report: Contribution to the Progress Review of the Action Plan of the Strategy for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo, 2009–2015:34).[9] In a context of highlighted vulnerability, statistics show the high prevalence of (domestic) violence affecting these communities. Besides, surveys have shown that 61% of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian women assert the presence of domestic violence within their community.[10]

The Serb community in northern Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999) faces a particular type of marginalisation. The northern municipalities (Leposavić; Zubin Potok; Zvečan; Mitrovica north) are formally part of Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999), but due to political reasons, in practice still functions in many ways as part of the Republic of Serbia. This has created a situation where neither Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999) nor Serbia effectively governs and provides services in this area and also civil society struggles to get engaged. The politically uncertain situation, which has been continuing since the 1999 conflict, has had detrimental effects on the rule of law as well as on the attitudes of its residents. Unfortunately, there is a lack of data on the situation in northern Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999), but the little information that is available paints a bleak picture. OSCE (2010) reports that, in northern Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999), infrastructure is poor and unemployment high; with UNDP (2013) also reporting that women are in a particularly vulnerable position. Both ECMI Kosovo and its partner NGO Aktiv have conducted their own research[1112] on the status quo of minority communities in Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999), with Aktiv (2013) highlighting that a structural lack of knowledge on human and women's rights, high unemployment among women and the prevalence of discriminatory attitudes towards gender issues have all contributed to leaving Serb women in northern Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999) vulnerable to GBV.

The roots of the problem and the factors contributing to it are extremely complicated and deeply entrenched into the familiar and societal structures alive in Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999) in general, and in the mentioned communities in particular. The traditionally-led families are commonly based on a

[8] OSCE. "The Implementation of Civil Service Legislation in Kosovo." OSCE, Feb. 2013. Web.
[9] OSCE. "The Implementation of Civil Service Legislation in Kosovo." OSCE, Feb. 2013. Web.
[10] Demolli, Luljeta. *Position of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women in Kosovo* (n.d.): n. pag. *Women's Network*. Kosovar Center for Gender Studies. Web.
[11] Waugh, Caleb. *Report on Domestic Violence in North Kosovo: The Institutional and Legal Situation in the Region* (n.d.): n. pag. *NGO Aktiv*. Aktiv. Web.
[12] ECMI Kosovo. *Promoting the Economic Empowerment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women in Kosovo* (n.d.): n. pag. ECMI Kosovo, 2013. Web.

strongly patriarchal structure, imposing fixed gender roles entailing a deep subordination of women. Tradition-derived gender discrimination comprehends limited access of girls and women to education, employment, property ownership, and inheritance rights. Furthermore, looking specifically at the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, a strong correlation between the particularly disadvantaged living conditions and the incidence of domestic violence appears evident. Conversely, this causal relation applies to a lower extent to the Serb community living the Northern region. Nevertheless, by assessing the high value generally attributed to the familiar bonds within the broader society and the perception of the importance of respecting them, the cultural dimension of domestic violence acquires validity for all concerned communities. This demonstrates the extreme arduousness of tackling it.

Lastly, a widespread lack of information concerning the available channels for reporting violence characterizes Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian women as well as the Serb community living in the North or in remote villages. Combined with an entrenched mistrust in the capacity and willingness of the relevant institutions to actually address the problem, this leads to the tendency not to report experienced or witnessed violence to the authorities, further hindering in this way the possibility to effectively contrast its occurrence.

III. COMMUNITY-BASED PARALEGAS

Community-based paralegals can contribute at strengthening vulnerable and marginalised groups and empowering them to advocate for their rights and needs; increase the awareness of gender equality, GBV, and early and forced marriages; and identify issues of their concern. South Africa began with the pilot project introducing the approach of the community-based paralegals which had a role on providing support to communities to have better access to justice.[13] Community-based paralegals or non-lawyers with specialised legal knowledge, are seen as a mechanism less expensive and more accessible than lawyers. Their engagement will improve the quality and delivery of legal services and stimulate the legal literacy of vulnerable and marginalised groups, especially women, in the municipality they are active and they will act as a mediator between them and local and central level institutions and organisations working to protect and promote their rights (Open Society Foundation, 2010).[14] Community-based paralegals are mainly young activists that are trained by the government institutions and/or organisations, within which they operate, to solve the most common vulnerable and marginalised groups' problems and in the same

[13] Open Society Foundations. "Community-Based Paralegals." (n.d.): n. pag. Open Society Foundations, 2010. Web.
[14] Open Society Foundations. "Community-Based Paralegals." (n.d.): n. pag. Open Society Foundations, 2010. Web.

time strengthen them to protect and promote their rights. Community-based paralegals in order to gain the trust of members of their communities use the combination of legal and non-legal tools, including advocacy, education, and community organizing. Their main role will be a mediator between vulnerable and marginalised community members and institutions/organisation dealing with human rights in Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999).[15]

A community-based paralegal can operate within local government institutions and/or organizations dealing with minority rights, focusing on women's rights, as a part-time or full-time, and is a person who:[16]

- Has basic knowledge of the law, the legal system and its procedures, and has basic legal skills;
- Is able to communicate ideas and information to community members using interactive teaching methods;
- Has the capacity to works to strengthen the capacities of community members to understand and act on minority community rights;
- Has community organizing skills that can be used to empower communities to address systematic problems on their own in the future;
- Is able to establish and maintain good working relationships with different stakeholders dealing with minority communities;
- Is able to identify prevention and treatment services that are established to protect and promote minority rights.

The more specific responsibilities and duties of the community-based paralegals towards vulnerable and marginalized groups are the following:

- **Legal and general advice**
  - Advise vulnerable and marginalised group members on how to handle legal or administrative problems regarding social assistance scheme, pensions, application for personal documents, their rights in case of application for divorce, applications for protection measures in case violence;
  - Suggest beneficiaries to consult Government Institutions and NGOs that provide social services;
  - Suggest the use of lawyers when needed to the beneficiary.

[15] Margaret Schuler & Sakuntala Kadirgamar-Rajasingham, Legal Literacy: A Tool for Women's Empowerment (1992).
[16] Open Society Foundations. "Community-Based Paralegals." (n.d.): n. pag. Open Society Foundations, 2010. Web.

- **Community education**
  - Community-based paralegals organise workshops within the institutions/organisations they operate to raise public awareness on minority rights, gender equality, GBV, and early and force marriages, and strengthen the capacity of individuals and groups, including civil society organizations, civil servants, government officials, to protect and promote minority rights, with the special focus on women's rights. The development and distribution of promotional material will be another tool of increasing the awareness of wider public on the above mentioned rights.

- **Litigation activities**
  - Identify violation cases and mediate between a victim and a lawyer. According to ECMI Kosovo experience, beneficiary trust to share their story more paralegals than representatives of different institutions and lawyers. Therefore, the role of the paralegal as a mediator between the institution and the survivor will be necessary.

- **Community organizing and advocacy**
  - Act as a mediator between the beneficiary and local and central level government institutions and organizations that provide social and health services;
  - Build strong cooperation between community members and media, Kosovo Policy and other stakeholders that deal with the protection and promotion of minority rights, focusing on vulnerable and marginalised groups.

However, Community-Based Paralegals may work as volunteers also. If the paralegals work as volunteers, the institution/organisation will ideally compensate them for transportation costs and other direct expenses. Trainings organized by the institutions and organization they are working for can be seen as a benefit to the paralegal because they contribute to the paralegal's personal and professional development.

The benefits of Community-Based Paralegals:

- Community-based paralegals can focus on the justice needs of an entire community as part of the institutions/organisation they are part of, not just the client who hires them;
- Entry barriers are low: It is much easier and less expensive to train and deploy paralegals than lawyers;

- Paralegals are low cost in comparison to lawyers;
- Community-based paralegals often know better the rights of the community they serve than a lawyers since their daily work is meeting face-to-face with the community;
- Paralegals can be paid by an NGO to represent the broad needs of the community, while lawyers take cases based on the client's ability to pay;
- From the ECMI Kosovo experience, paralegals gain the trust of minority communities faster and have easy access to vulnerable and marginalized groups easier than institutions and organisations that deal with community rights.

IV. ECMI KOSOVO EXPERIENCE

ECMI Kosovo was engaged in the two-year project from 2014 to 2016, "Empowering Minority Communities in Kosovo against Gender-Based Violence" funded by the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women implemented in partnership with NRAEWOK, CLARD and Aktiv. This project aimed to provide legal and economic empowerment of Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian and Serb women from the municipalities of Ferizaj/Uroševac, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Gračanica/Graçanicë and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica North by addressing their limited access to adequate gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and treatment services and extreme socioeconomic vulnerability. In addition, it aimed to raise awareness among members of both genders of these communities on women's rights, gender equality and mechanisms against GBV.

One of the main components of the project was to train, engage and support eight local minority female activists as community-based paralegals who assisted the beneficiaries to have improved information on and access to prevention and treatment services.

Training and technical assistance was provided to eight local female minority activists throughout their engagement which provided them with the skills and knowledge to act as qualified community paralegals. The paralegal was the focal point for all project activities in her community, linked beneficiaries to relevant service providers, maintained contacts with community leaders and municipal authorities and engaged in raising awareness on gender equality and challenging negative gender norms and attitudes. As such, the engagement of the community based paralegal was the core of the project. Four paralegals were from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in the two targeted municipalities in southern Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999) and four from the Serb communities. The women were residents of the targeted

municipalities, respected by their local communities and had a proven record of social activism. A strong preference was given to women already engaged with local (non-governmental) organisations since that ensured their continued engagement in the community after the finalisation of the project.

Throughout the project, the paralegals gained the necessary skills and knowledge to act efficiently on GBV issues. Beneficiaries from all four municipalities highly benefited directly not only from the increase of information to prevention and treatment services but also through the trust relationships that have been established between paralegals and minority women in the targeted communities. The trust relationships were formed in a way that, even after the end of the ECMI project, the beneficiaries continue to feel comfortable to contact the paralegals if whenever they need help with any information.

CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY-BASED PARALEGLAS

During the two years implementation of the project, community-based paralegals has a lot of challenges during their daily work which are mentioned below:

- It was not easy for paralegals to gain trust of women in the targeted municipalities, especially those that were victims of GBV. According to paralegals, victims of GBV do not trust very much local institutions including Kosovo Police and many of them decided not to share their concern with any person. One of the most important activity that made paralegals gain the trust of women were home visits. Paralegals through the conduction of home visits were able to identify problems that many women face and then organise meetings where the identified topics were discussed. After 3-4 months of working in the field, paralegals started to be known figures that all women associated them with activists willing to help minority communities;
- Women hesitated to report the violence because of the lack of trust to the institutions;
- Because of the Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999) and Serbia political situation, many women beneficiaries in the Northern municipalities did not want to ask for support to Kosovo Institutions (under UN SCR 1244/1999), or consult the Kosovo legislation (under UN SCR 1244/1999) but they wanted to have information on Serbian Institution and Legislation;
- The main problem of women was identified to be the economic dependency to their husbands or any other member of their family; thus, there was no budget to provide financial support to women in need;

- Migration of members of minority communities during 2014 and 2015 affected the project in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje and Ferizaj/Uroševac.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMUNITY-BASED PARALEGLAS

- Organise not only capacity building activities and provide technical support but also allocate budget to provide micro-grants to women to develop their new business ideas and/or to support existing business to improve their quality of products and services they offer;
- Allocate a budget to support women in need (for example provide financial support to cover the cost of travel when they come to Prishtina/Priština to collect any document or apply for social assistance);
- There is a need of more paralegals per municipalities in order to be able to reach all minority women;
- Organise more skills training activities and provide financial support so women can start practicing their profession (for example in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje and Ferizaj/Uroševac, women were part of hairdressing and sawing skills training. Paralegals and the trainers comments were that some of the women that participated in these courses were very active and are able to open their businesses or start to work);
- Provide continuous psychological support to paralegals to prevent burn-outs;
- Provide continuous psychological support to beneficiaries, especially to GBV victims;
- The role of paralegals it is very much needed in all targeted municipalities. Women, trust paralegals and are very enthusiastic to be part of future activities and initiatives.

After two years engagement in the ECMI Kosovo project, community-based paralegals have greater capacity (skills, knowledge and resources) and the necessary community trust to assist women in the community with matters related to GBV; have the capacity to support beneficiaries in a wide range of issues that are not directly related to GBV, but will play an important role in earning the trust of the community and proving their utility (media on any issues with authorities; support in applying to social services i.e. welfare assistance, pension, child benefits; basic legal advice in property, employment and other civil law issues; and support in acquiring personal documents, an issue of major concern for the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities); and have established good relationship with stakeholders such as Kosovo Police, the Centres for Social Work, health centres, and the municipal officer for gender equality.

ECMI Kosovo foresees that the mechanism of paralegals can be sustainable. Public institutions, in particular municipal institutions, have had the opportunity to see that many women benefited from paralegals' support in the past two years. They have also seen the level of professionalism and dedication of the paralegals within each municipality. Because of this, the institutions and organisations are recommendation to consider to make the job of a 'paralegal' an official position within their system which will provide the possibility to paralegals to continue to provide support to beneficiaries in the field even after the project ends. All paralegals are very ambitious and very motivated to continue to provide support to women also after the project end, if possible as part of any institution or NGO. After two years being in the field every day, paralegals now are a familiar face that can solve a lot community problems.

V. ECMI KOSOVO RECOMMENDATIONS

The approach to use community-based paralegals is inspired by Open Society's positive experiences in Sierra Leone, as set out in its Practitioner's Guide on Community-based Paralegals (2010)[17]. It is a promising strategy since it focuses on strengthening the community, as opposed to many current interventions in Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999) on GBV, which focus on supporting institutions that often neglect, or do not have access to minority communities. Key to the success of this strategy will be the recruitment of strong local female activists ready to engage in this role and integrate into the frameworks of Local Level Institutions and NGOs dealing with women's issues. It is important to note that, in line with Open Society's methodology, the paralegals will not just provide legal advice, but rather function as a mediator between Institutions, NGOs and beneficiaries and advocate for minority women. The use of paralegals as a mechanism to increase access to justice and institutions for marginalised and vulnerable groups has been used for the first time by ECMI Kosovo project funded by the UNTF to end Violence against Women. Throughout two years of the implementation of the project, ECMI Kosovo with its eight paralegals based in four targeted municipalities, through home visits and organisation of different activities reached and provided support more than 1,700 women out of which 18 were survivors of GBV. After two years active in the targeted municipalities, community-based paralegals with their presence and support managed to build trust between them and women in the field, and in the same time raise awareness on women's rights, gender balance, GBV and early and forced marriages.

[17] Open Society Foundations. "Community-Based Paralegals." (n.d.): n. pag. Open Society Foundations, 2010. Web.

Therefore, based on ECMI Kosovo's experience Community-Based Paralegal programs can provide support to vulnerable and marginalised groups on the issues of their concern such as education, employment, health care, gender equality, GBV, and early and forced marriages and help them have access to the legal system.

Community-Based Paralegals Program

Community-Based Paralegals programme can be introduced by the Local Level Institutions (Directorate of Health and Social Welfare, Directorate of Education, Directorate of Economic Development, Office for Communities and Return, Office for Gender Equality, Centre for Social Welfare, Kosovo Police, Safe Houses, Victim Advocacy Office) and Non-Governmental Organisations working for vulnerable and marginalised groups. Community-based paralegals will aim to provide support to vulnerable and marginalised groups to address issues of their concern such as education, employment, health care, gender equality, GBV, and early and forced marriages.

Paralegals within Local Level Institutions and Non-Governmental Organisations

Local Level Institutions and Organisations that work with the protection and promotion of the rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups can hire part-time and/or full time young activists to act as a community-based paralegals in the municipality they live who will provide support to them on the issues of their concern such as education, employment, health care, gender equality, GBV, and early and forced marriages. Based on the ECMI Kosovo experience, the introduction of paralegals as a mechanism to reach the target group, have been a great success. Throughout two years of the implementation of the project, paralegals with the support of ECMI Kosovo and its partner organisations through the organisation of skills trainings, quarterly meetings with women, workshops discussions with men, home visits, provision of micro-grants, and formal and informal meetings with women, implementation of the curriculum on women's rights in high schools in four targeted municipalities have managed to reach more than 2,500 beneficiaries (women, men and young students). Eight paralegals in four targeted municipalities were the main focal point of the project; thus, with their presence, we can conclude that the project's objectives were fully reached. Therefore, from the ECMI Kosovo successful experience, the following recommendations are drafted to Institutions and Organisations:

- Community-based paralegals are a great mechanism to reach vulnerable and marginalised groups in need, especially women and victims of GBV. It was proven that community paralegals have more access to women in the field that representatives of institutions and organisations;
- Community-based paralegals may already be a part of Institutions and NGOs and can potentially be the link between them and beneficiaries;
- Vulnerable and marginalised groups, especially women trust more community-based paralegals (being from the same community) and are more able to communicate with them then with the representatives of different institutions and organisations;
- Paralegals resulted to be very effective on establishing cooperation with all available local instruments and mechanisms (Kosovo police, Centres for Social Welfare, Municipal Administration, etc) and beneficiaries. All stakeholders that deal with vulnerable and marginalised groups shall be invited to participate in activities organised within the Institutions/Organisations in order to meet directly the victims of GBV or people in need;
- Women have a greater trust in community based paralegals compared to external legal professionals;
- Community-based paralegals were proven to be effective in mediation between victims of gender-based violence and relevant institutions;

Recruitment and training community-based paralegals based on ECMI Kosovo experience and recommendations of eight paralegals

- Paralegals shall be from the area in which they will serve;
- Paralegals must have at least 1 year of experience on provide social services and shall be able and willing to cope with the program of the Institution/Organisation; Candidates for paralegals will be assessed based on the criteria set by a professional Board which will be established by the relevant institution/organisation;
- ECMI Kosovo based on its experience, recommends institutions and organisations that are interested to introduce community-based paralegals to establish a program that will have the following phases:
    1. Phase one: Two (2) months of induction and orientation. It covers the basics of how to conduct outreach work; interaction with community members; interactions with programme partners such as the police and courts and other stakeholders such traditional leaders, and civic structures; and how and to whom they have to report their findings.

2. Phase two: Candidates have to attend the three (3) months training programme developed by the local level institutions and/or organization. The training program will cover the following issues: Kosovo legislation on the protection and promotion of women's rights (under UN SCR 1244/1999); Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244/1999) administrative instructions on the protection and promotion of women's rights; how to approach victims of GBV; how to advocate for gender equality, GBV and early and forced marriages; identification of Institutions dealing with women's rights; how to build cooperation with other NGOs and Local and Central level institutions that work to protect and promote women's rights; identification of Institutions dealing with women's rights;
3. Phase three: Post-assessment of paralegal training, and lasts in between one (1) and two (2) months. Paralegals are assessed on their practical ability to provide legal advice, and improve their knowledge of the law. The Certificate is awarded after this phase to those who demonstrate competency by the certified institution/organisation that is responsible to provide the training program.
4. Finally, local level institutions and/or organisations provide on-going training on Kosovo legislation (under UN SCR 1244/1999); administrative instructions; best practices on how to approach victims of GBV; challenges of paralegals working on protection and promotion of women's rights; how to better advocate for gender equality, GBV and early and forced marriages; provide psychological support to avoid burn outs; and other issues as/if suggested by paralegals. The training program must be offered to paralegals three (3) times a year. Training is also given on emerging issues arising from their interaction with community members and other stakeholders.

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